Mythopoeic Society MYTHLORE A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 21
Number 2

Article 57

Winter 10-15-1996

"A Pattern Which Our Nature Cries Out For": The Medieval Tradition of the Ordered Four in the Fiction of J.R.R. Tolkien

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Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021

Abstract

This paper considers the fiction of J.R.R. Tolkien and the other Inklings (specifically C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams) as being influenced by a set of shared ideas. First, Tolkien and the Inklings believed in a divine creator whose creation displays order. Every individual, they claimed, has been divinely called to be a "sub-creator" to create art so that this universal order might be reflected. And the Inklings' writings testify to the importance of this order in their lives (as displayed by six Medieval analogies: God as composer, choreographer, author, painter, player and guide). Secondly, Tolkien and the Inklings were familiar with the primarily Medieval notion that the matter of the world is inherently divided into groups of "four." This division may be seen around humans (in Nature), among humans, within humans, and in human creations (Art). And every division of four may be seen to adhere to one of eight forms. And finally, Tolkien and his colleagues perceived the process of creation, whether by God or humans, to be similar. There is a three-step process of 1) selecting parts with which to work, 2) creating a border within which to work, and 3) combining these separate pieces in a unique, ordered way so as to produce a harmonic whole. The narrative structure of *The Lord of the Rings* represents the most effective application of these ideas. Tolkien's masterpiece makes use of a Medieval interlace structure which depends on the interaction of four narrative groups which exist after the breaking of the Fellowship. Weaving these four lines of narration is central to the "rhythm and ordering" of the tale and displays Tolkien's real skill. And not surprisingly, these four narrative groups can be better understood in the light of other creative divisions: the four elements, the four traditional classes of society, the four divisions of colour, the four parts of choral harmony, the four sections of an orchestra, etc.

Additional Keywords

divisions of the Four; the Inklings; interlace structure; C.S. Lewisl medieval analogies of order; narrative structure; process of creativity; Charles Williams

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Key words: divisions of the Four, the Inklings, interlace structure, C. S. Lewis, mediaeval analogies of order, narrative structure, process of creativity, Charles Williams

Despite their very distinct types of fiction, J.R.R. Tolkien and the other Inklings (namely C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams) shared a keen passion in the "stuff" of the universe – that is, those items in the world which an artist may choose as building blocks when creating new art. Tolkien and the others shared a core creative philosophy which was essentially threefold: first, they believed that the world is ordered – purposefully crafted by a divine creator. And they believed that as part of this creation, humans necessarily reflect the divine order when they create; it is through their artwork, in fact, that humans fulfil their call to become sub-creators (as Tolkien labelled himself). Secondly, they recognized a natural division of four in the "stuff" of the universe. This primarily (though not exclusively) Medieval notion dominated the works with which they were most familiar. And finally, Tolkien and the Inklings understood the act of creation (whether by God or humans) to be this: combining separate parts in a unique, ordered way so as to produce a harmonic whole.

Thus they possessed an ideology which was Christian in philosophy, Medieval in form, and Mythopoeic in nature. These beliefs affected their religious thought, directed their academic pursuits, and, as it relates to an understanding of their fiction, will be the focus of this paper. Each of these

ideas will be considered in turn before looking at the most effective application of these ideas, *The Lord of The Rings*.

The World Is Ordered

Finding ways to describe the divine creator is a task as old as humankind, but six particular analogies dominated Medieval thought: God as Composer, Choreographer, Author, Painter, Player and Guide. Not surprisingly, these are the same analogies which dominate the writings of Tolkien and two of the other Inklings, Lewis and Williams. All of these analogies are included in Figure 1, and should be very familiar, for they have been explored by writers for centuries. Tolkien's allusions to these analogies are listed above those of Lewis, Williams, and some of the more familiar non-Inkling authors. The references have been selected from letters, fiction and scholarly works and testify to the significance which the Medieval analogies held in every area of the Inklings' lives. And each of the entries confirms a core belief in an ordered, created world, and in creatures who are called to reflect this order by sub-creating.

Also central to each of these analogies is the relationship between the creator and creature. While the creator was traditionally depicted as maintaining a comprehensive view of the piece of art, the creature in the midst of the creation was believed to possess only a limited perspective. The image of The Divine Dance of the Universe is typical: although life's dance steps may seem chaotic to one down in the midst of the hurried frenzy, the divine one who has choreographed it all watches from above and understands how every measured step of the complicated pattern interacts with every other step. Several times Frodo and Sam discuss this feeling of being part of a divine order[1].

One of the best pieces of Tolkien criticism, T.A. Shippey's *The Road to Middle-earth*, discusses the analogy of humans as part of a created story:

> Events in the world, they say, appear chaotic and unplanned, appear so all but unmistakably. But however strong that impression is, it is a subjective one founded on the inevitably limited view of any individual.
>
> (Shippey, 1983, p. 124)

It is the creator's job to see that order exists on the grand scale, while allowing tensions to rise and fall in the midst of the created piece.

In *An Experiment in Criticism* Lewis discusses a human's role in creation:

> If the Poiema [something made], or the exercises, or the dance is devised by a master, the rests and movements, the quickenings and slowings, the easier and the more arduous passages, will come exactly as we need them . . . It would have been unbearable if it had ended a moment sooner or later or in any different way. Looking back on the performance, we shall feel that we have been led through a pattern or arrangement of activities which our nature cried out for.
>
> (Lewis, 1973a, pp. 133-4)

The Divisions of Four

Just as the Medieval analogies appealed to the Inklings, so did the Medieval patterns. Every number held some significance in the medieval mind, and "four" was believed to represent the temporal world. All of existence, in fact, was felt to be made up of four parts: the world was composed of the four elements; earth constantly underwent the cycle of the four seasons; distances were limited by the four corners of the earth (such references were still used, although only figuratively, in the Middle Ages). Four, they reasoned, was also one number away from the number of God – three, the Trinity. Added together, the numbers of God and humans came to seven, the number of perfection.

In his *Commentary of The Dream of Scipio*, Macrobius discusses the relationship between the creator and his medium, the four elements: "The creator of the universe bound the elements together with an unbearable chain . . . For thus, in spite of the utter diversity of these elements, the Creator harmonized them so skilfully that they could be readily united" (MacQueen, 1985, p. 61). The skill of the Creator, one sees again, is in bringing about harmony – specifically, through the ordering of four parts. John MacQueen's excellent text, *Numerology*, provides an important survey of the subject as it relates to medieval writers, and one of his conclusions is particularly valuable: "The harmony . . . of the four elements is derived from the harmonic, 'genial' properties of the number four." (MacQueen, 1985, p. 61).

These various divisions of four exist throughout the universe, as the four main categories in Figure 2 indicate: order around humans (Nature), among humans, within humans, and in human creations (Art). The idea of order and harmony is bound up intimately with the division of four. Four represents balance: the mixture of all four medieval humours, for example, was said to indicate balance in an individual's temperament. Four represents completion: the four seasons together represent a complete year; the combination of the four Gospel accounts provides a complete picture of Christ in his various roles (humanity, royalty, divinity and sacrifice). Four also represents harmony: the presence of all four choral parts, in Western music at least, defines musical harmony.

Figure 2 also includes examples of four found within Tolkien's, Lewis' and Williams' fiction. Every item in this figure is also accompanied by a symbol which describes the "form" of four which the item takes. In total, there are eight principal forms, and these are described in Figure 3. Figures 4, 5 and 6 focus on the individual items of Figure 3 in terms of their four component parts. Thus, Figures 2-6 testify to the fact that throughout history, the order of the world has been believed to be composed structurally by four, divided spatially by four, and rotated through cycles of four. Human

[1] Note in figure 1: Sam says he feels as if he were "inside a song" (Tolkien, 1986a, p. 455) and later realizes they are part of a great tale (Tolkien, 1986b, p. 408).

Order in the Universe: the Medieval analogies

created by S. Yandell, 1992

The Music of the Spheres God as Composer/Conductor	The Divine Dance of the Universe God as Choreographer	The Divine Story/ Drama of Life God as Author/Playwright	The Great Painting / Tapestry of Life God as Painter/Weaver	The Great Game of Life God as Player	The Great Journey of Life God as Cartographer/Guide	(Also: God as Sculptor, God as Architect, God as Chef)
•Song of Eru/Music of the Ainur *Sil* 3-4, 8 •"The song of Luthien released the bonds of winter, and the frozen waters spoke." *Sil* 199 •"I feel as if I was *inside* a song, if you take my meaning." Sam, FR 455 •"And I would not have it said of me in song only that I was always left behind!" Merry, RK 93 •"And now the songs have come down among us out of strange places and walk visible under the Sun." Theoden, TT197	•"Luthien danced upon a green hill...and flowers sprang from the cold earth where her feet had passed." *Sil* 199	•"The Knowledge of the Creation Drama was incomplete." Lett 147 •"Someone else always has to carry on the story." Bilbo, FR 306 •"Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?" "A Man may do both," said Aragorn. Eomer and Aragorn, TT 45 •"Don't the great tales never end?"..."The people in them come, and go when their part's ended." Sam and Frodo TT 407,8 •"Well, one can't be everywhere at once...But I missed a lot, seemingly." Sam, RK 290	•"They lost the thread of his tale..." FR 182 •"There are children in your land who, out of the twisted threads of story, could pick the answer to your question." Gandalf to Theoden, TT197 •Meduseld's tapestries: "Many woven cloths were hung upon the walls, and over their wide spaces marched figures of ancient leg end..." TT148 •Niggle's painting: "All the leaves he had ever laboured on were there." Leaf By Niggle		•The Lost Road journey •"The road goes ever on and on...and I must follow, if I can..." FR110 •"He used to say there was only one Road..'You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to.'" Frodo, about Bilbo, FR 110 •"There was once a little man called Niggle, who had a long journey to make..." Leaf By Niggle	The Inklings: J.R.R. Tolkien
•Music of the Universe *Perelandra* 214 •Song of creation/singing stars MN 98,99 •"We had the musicians up in the rigging playing flutes so that it sounded like music out of the sky." Lucy, PC 107 •"You must conceive yourself looking up at a world lighted, warmed, and resonant with music." (recommendation to readers of medieval literature) *The Discarded Image* 112 •"[the spaces] were perpetually filled with sweet, immeasurable sound. The vast hollow spheres, turning each at its proper interval inside its superior, gave out a blended harmony." *Studies in Med. and Ren. Literature* 52 •"The melodies and silences of Heaven will be shouted down in the end." *Screwtape Letters* 114	•"Each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance." *Mere Xianity* 153 •Dance of the planets *Perelandra* 214, 217-219 •The Company of St. Anne's "taking their places places in the ordered rhythm of the universe." THS 325 •"The great lords of the upper sky know the steps of their dance too well for that." Cornelius, PC 45 •Dance of the trees: PC 134 •"I shall take my rising again...and once more tread the great dance." Ramandu, VDT 180 •The Great Snow Dance SC 193 •"The eternal dance" *Prob Pain* 153 •"If the dance is devised by a master, the rests and movements ...will come exactly as we need them." *Exp Crit* 133 •"a subtler image of creation...would be the almost simultaneous mutual adaption in the movements of two expert dancing partners." Miracles Appendix B	•Spell for the Refreshment of the Spirit: "I will tell it to you for years and years." VDT 136 •Message in giant city: SC 133 •"Now at last they were beginning Chapter One in the Great Story." LB 184 •"I tell no-one any story but his own." HHB 159, 194 •"No-one is told what would've happened." PC 137, VDT 136 •"But stranger, the sacred story is about...the things we do in the temple." TWHF 246 •"the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see." "Miracles" •"We do not even know whether we are in Act I or Act V...The Author knows." "The World's Last Night" 104,5 •"The whole...drama, or pattern of this life is to be played out in each one of us" *Mere Xianity* 153 •Novel analogy: Miracles Appendix B	•"And the sea in the mirror...were in one sense just the same as the real ones; yet at the same time...different - deeper, more wonderful." LB 170 •A painting with several contributors: "The work done by every mass and color in the new patches will be affected through and through by the parts of the original...we should think of the total result chemically rather than arithmetically." *Discarded Image* 209 •"He is the painter, we are only the picture." *Mere Xianity* 172 •"[Ransom] had been forced out of the frame, caught up into the larger pattern." *Perelandra* 147,8 •line drawing analogy: Miracles Appendix B	•"A mad chase began...It was such a romp as no one has ever had except in Narnia; and whether it was more like playing with a thunderstorm or...a kitten Lucy could never make up her mind." LWW 160,1 •The Great Snow Dance: "Of course it is a kind of game as well as a dance..." SC 193 •"But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play world." Puddleglum to the Lady of the Green Kirtle, SC 159 •"If a game is played, it must be possible to lose it." *Prob of Pain* 118 •"They did not know the first rule of the holy game..." *Prob of Pain* 153	•"He stole out by the back door and set his face to the West to seek for the Island." *The Pilgrim's Regress* 16	C.S. Lewis
•Music of the chessboard: "There came a slight sound of music...perhaps the faint sound itself was but their harmonized movement upon their field." *Greater Trumps* 28	•Dance of the chessboard: "A number of little figures...were all in movement...as if to some complicated measure." GT 28 •"Imagine that everything which exists takes part in the movement of a great dance."GT 94,95	•"All things at all times and every where, rehearsed; some great art was in practice and the only business anyone had was to see that his part was perfect." DH 147		•The Divine chessboard: "The figures might have seemed like those in a game." GT 28		Charles Williams
•Plato,Pythagoras,Kepler: musical harmony underlies the cosmos •Greece's eight sirens: eight single notes came together to form the concord of a single harmony. •"Where were you [at creation] when the morning stars sang together?" God to Job, Job 38:4,7	•Dante •Sir John Davies "Orchestra Or a Poeme of Dauncing" 1596 •Milton	•"All the world's a stage/And all the men and women merely players..." Jaques, As You Like It II.vii.134	•"There she weaves by night and day...And moving through a mirror clear...Shadows of the world appear." "The Lady of Shalott" ll. 37, 46-48, Tennyson •"The commonest room is a room in a poem when I turn to the glass." G Macdonald, *Phantastes* 66	•Game of the World being played by the Celtic gods	•*Pilgrim's Progress*, 1684 •*Everyman* - late 15th c	Other Fiction / Myth

Figure 1

Order in the Universe: the patterns

Order around humans - Nature

- Celtic festivals
- Celtic regions
- Creatures (5 sets)
- Daily cycle
- Daughters of God
- Directions of the World
- Eden's rivers
- Elements
- Elemental regions
- Fate cycle
- God, aspects of
- Gospels
- Greek gods, ruling
- Hell's rivers
- Horsemen of the Apocalypse
- Jerusalem's walls
- Jesus (dying/reviving god), cycle of life
- Jesus, aspects of
- Life cycle
- Light
- Lunar cycle
- Objects (4 sets)
- Prophets, major
- Qualities
- Sacrificial forms
- Season cycle
- Spirits
- Water cycle
- Winds
- Zodiac, ruling

Order among humans

- Classes of society

Order within humans

- DNA
- Personality types, modern
- Psychological functions
- Smell, sense of
- Taste, sense of
- Temperaments/humours
- Touch, sense of
- Virtues, cardinal

Order in human creations - Art

- Choral setting
- Pigments
- Orchestra instrument families
- Printing process colors

Four in Tolkien

- Ages of Middle-earth
- Middle-earth hierarchy
- Narrative groups, LOTR
- Races bound by the rings
- Shire Farthings
- Steps in Creation of Ea

Four in Lewis

- Deep Space hierarchy
- Narnian hierarchy
- Pevensie children
- Spell for the Refreshment of the Spirit
- Thrones of Cair Paravel

Four in Williams

- Alternatives of the soul
- Suits of the Divine Tarot
- Virtues for writing poetry
- Ways of Love

Figure 2

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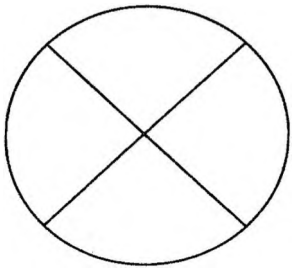
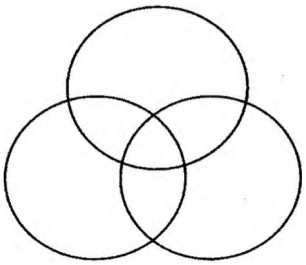
The Forms of Four:

Four as Combination



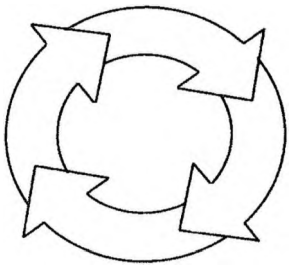
- Each part can mix with any other part

Four as Connection



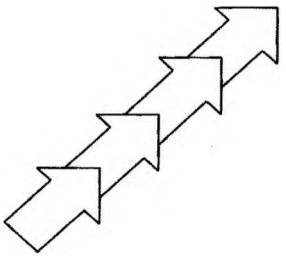
- Three parts are equally bound to a fourth, central part

Four as Cycle



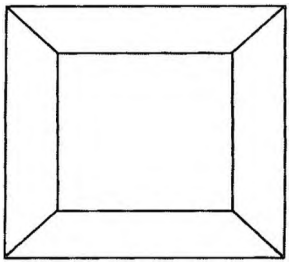
- Related to the passing of time; a continuous repetition
- Each part leads into, and follows from, one other part

Four as Progression



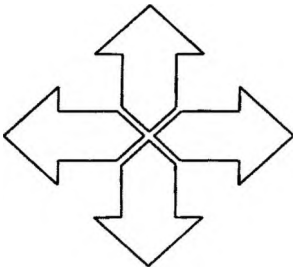
- Related to the passing of time, but does not repeat a cycle ; the series may or may not lead to a climax
- Each part leads into, and/or follows from, one other part

Four as Boundary



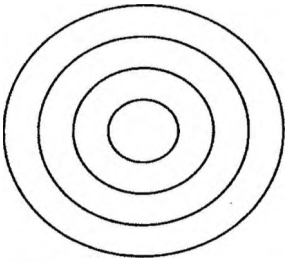
- Each part creates one side of a boundary
- Each part touches two others - one on each side

Four as Options



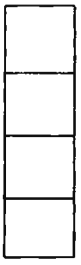
- Each part is an available, mutually-exclusive option

Four as Hierarchy



- Each part is embedded in a hierarchy where the parts get larger from the center
- Each part touches either one or two other parts

Four as Linear Hierarchy



- Each part is embedded in a linear hierarchy where each part is of equal size
- Each part touches either one or two other parts

Figure 3

created by S. Yandell, 1992

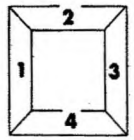
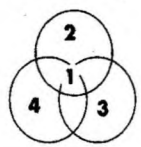


Figure 4
created by S. Yandell, 1992

Four as Boundary

each part creates one side of a boundary and touches two other parts (one on each of its sides)

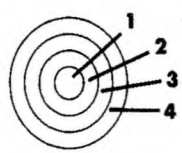
complete item	1	2	3	4	sources
Directions of the World	West	North	East	South	earliest cultures
Eden's rivers	Euphrates	Gihon	Tigris	Pishon	Judeo-Xian, Gen. 3:15
Hell's rivers, feed into Styx	Phlegethon	Lethe	Cocytus	Acheron	Greek, traditional
Jerusalem's walls	West wall	North wall	East wall	South wall	Judeo-Xian, Rev. 21:12
Celtic regions / main city	West/Connacht/Murias	North/Ulster/Falias	East/Leinster/Gorias	South/Munster/Finias	Celtic, traditional
Winds (Eos&Astraeus' sons)	Zephyrus, west wind	Boreas, north wind	Eurus, east wind	Notus, south wind	Greek, traditional



Four as Connection

Three parts are equally bound to a fourth, central part

complete item	1	2	3	4	sources
Light	white - additive mix of light	red	green	blue-violet	Sir Isaac Newton, 17th c
Pigments	black - mixture	red - primary color	blue - primary color	yellow - primary color	early cultures, traditional
Printing process colors	black - "key" color	magenta	cyan	yellow	color printing, 18th c



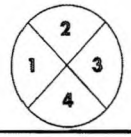
Four as Hierarchy

Each part is embedded in a hierarchy; each part gets larger away from the center, and each part touches either one or two other parts

complete item	1	2	3	4	sources
Classes of society	priests	warriors	merchants	servants	India, traditional
Elemental regions	earth	water	air	fire	Greek, traditional

Figure 5
created by S. Yandell, 1992

Four as Combination

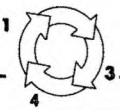


Each part can mix with any other part

complete item	1	2	3	4	sources
Choral setting	soprano	alto	tenor	bass	Western music, 12th c
Creatures (5 sets)					
Ezekiel's vision / Evangelists	man/angel, Matthew	lion, Mark	eagle, John	bull/calf/ox, Luke	Judeo-Xian,Ez. 1:10, Rev 4:7
Sumerian	peacock	lion	eagle	ox	Sumerian
Chinese	turtle	dragon	phoenix	unicorn	Chinese
Socratic	man	horse	cock	sheep	Socrates' followers, 5c BC
Egyptian gods of dead	man	dog/jackal	eagle	ape	Egyptian
DNA	adenine	guanine	thymine	cytosine	1950's Crick and Watson
Daughters of God	Truth (represents OT)	Righteousness (OT)	Peace (represents NT)	Mercy (NT)	Piers Plowman, 1380
Elements	fire	water	air	earth	Galen, 2nd c Greece
God, aspects of	creator	ruler	comforter/guide	servant	Judeo-Xian, Medieval
Gospels	Matthew	Mark	John	Luke	Judeo-Xian
Greek gods, ruling	Mars	Venus	Jupiter	Neptune	Greek, traditional
Horsemen of the Apocalypse	White - conquer/pestilence	Black - famine	Pale - death	Red - war	Judeo-Xian, Rev. 6:2-8
Jesus, aspects of	humanity (Matthew)	royalty (Mark)	divinity (John)	sacrificial (Luke)	Judeo-Xian, Medieval
Objects (4 sets)					
Archetypal symbols	sword	cup, drinking horn	lance, wand, tree, sceptre	dish,coin,circle,body,ship womb,egg,burial mound,hill	earliest fertility cults
Celtic gifts/Masters	sword / Uscias	cauldron / Semias	spear / Esras	stone / Morfessa	Celtic, traditional
Grail symbols	Sword of the Dolorous stroke	Grail, as cup of last supper	Lance of Longinius	Grail, as blood receptacle at cross; paten	Medieval (French, British)
Suits	swords (spades)	cups (hearts)	wands (diamonds)	coins, deniers (clubs)	Egyptian and after
Orchestra instrument families	brass	woodwinds	percussion	strings	modern form, 17th century
Personality types, modern	SP "Doers"	SJ "Keepers"	NT "Knowers"	NF "Growers"	Myers-Briggs, 20th c
Prophets, major	Ezekiel	Daniel	Jeremiah	Isaiah	Judeo-Xian, traditional
Psychological functions	intuition	sensation	thinking	feeling	Jung, early 20th c
Qualities	hot	wet	dry	cold	Greek, traditional
Sacrificial forms	cremation/death by fire	burial/death by earth	drowning/death by water	hanging/death by air	Celtic, traditional
Smell, sense of	fragrant	acid	rancid	burnt	science, 20th c
Spirits	salamanders	gnomes	undines/water nymphs	sylphs	early cultures,Rosicrucians
Taste, sense of	bitter	salt	sweet	sour	science, 20th c
Temperaments/humours	choleric/cholera	melancholic/black bile	phlegmatic/phlegm	sanguine/blood	Hippocrates, 4th c BC
Touch, sense of	contact	pressure	temperature	pain	science, 20th c
Virtues, cardinal	prudence	temperance	fortitude	justice	Judeo/Xian, Medieval
Zodiac, ruling	Aries/Leo/Sagittarius	Taurus/Virgo/Capricorn	Gemini/Libra/Aquarius	Caner/Scorpio/Pisces	Greek, traditional

Figure 6
created by S. Yandell, 1992

Four as Cycle



As time passes, each part leads into, and follows from, one other part, continuously repeating the order of parts

complete item	1	2	3	4	sources
Daily cycle	dawn/sunrise/morning 6am-noon	noon/afternoon noon-6pm	sunset/dusk/evening 6pm-midnight	night midnight-6am	earliest cultures
Fate cycle	Regnabo "I will rule"	Regno "I rule"	Regnavi "I have ruled"	Sum Sine Regno "I am without rule"	European, medieval
Jesus (dying/reviving god) cycle of life	incarnation/resurrection	ministry	passion	crucifixion/ascension	earliest cultures
Life cycle	birth/youth (0-20)	maturity (21-40)	adulthood (41-60)	seniority/death (61-80)	earliest cultures
Lunar cycle	new moon/waxing to half (day 1 - 7)	half moon/waxing to full (day 8 - 14)	full moon/waning to half (day 15 - 21)	half moon/waning to new (day 22 - 28)	earliest cultures
Season cycle	Spring (13 weeks/91 days)	Summer	Fall	Winter	earliest cultures
Water cycle	fountains	rivers	seas	rain, snow	earliest cultures
Celtic festivals	Vernal Equinox (March 22) Beltain (April 30)	Summer Solstice (June 21) Lughnasadh (July 31)	Autumnal Equinox (September 22) Samhain (October 31)	Winter Solstice (December 21) Oimelc (January 31)	Celtic, traditional

Four in Inkling fiction

complete item	1	2	3	4	sources
Ages of Middle-earth	First Age	Second Age	Third Age	Fourth Age	ME history
Middle-earth hierarchy	Eru	Valar	Maiar	races of Middle-earth	Middle-earth history
Narrative groups, LOTR	Gandalf, sometimes with Pippin	Aragorn, with Legolas and Gimli	Merry, sometimes with Pippin	Sam, with Frodo	LOTR
Races bound by the rings	Maiar - Sauron's one ring	Elves -three rings	Humans - nine rings	Dwarves - seven rings	*Sil* pp3-6
Shire Farthings	West farthing	North farthing	East farthing	South farthing	H, FR p30
Steps in Creation of Ea	first theme	second theme	third theme	silence/vision/creation	ME history
Deep Space hierarchy	The Old One and Maleldil	Oyarsa	Eldila	hnau and dumb animals	Space Trilogy
Narnian hierarchy	Emperor O.S. and Aslan	High King	nobility, humans	talking and dumb animals	Narnian Chronicles
Pevensie children	Peter	Edmund	Susan	Lucy	LWW
Spell for the Refreshment of the Spirit	cup	sword	tree	green hill	VDT p133
Thrones of Cair Paravel	High King's	King's	Queen's	Queen's	LWW p78
Alternatives of the soul	revolt	obey	compromise	deceive	*Descent into Hell* p185
Suits of the Divine Tarot	cup	sword	deniers	wands	*Greater Trumps* p44
Virtues for writing poetry	clarity	speed	humility	courage	*Descent into Hell* p63
Ways of Love	Almighty love	physical sensation - the play of love	pardon - the speed of love	action - the fact of love	*Descent into Hell* p147

societies have been seen as divided by four, as have been their bodies, the elements of their religions, and their artistic creations.

Again, these are truths which were embraced not only by Medieval authors, but also by Tolkien and the other Inklings. And their scientific validity was not at all a factor in their attractiveness to these authors; the notion of order was the vital concern. It is true, for example, that a fourth bodily fluid had to be invented by Galen just to conform to his elemental theories, but sociologists today still classify human personalities in four main groups although they are not named after the original temperaments. The senses are another good example of four that are recognized today; the primary way in which humans understand reality is through the senses, and yet science has discovered that humans can really only taste four types of tastes; one's smell receptors can only distinguish four different smells; and one only receives four types of touch information. It is the varied combination of all of these sensory inputs that allows a person to experience the diversity of the sensual world. Probably the best example of a modern division of four is the twentieth-century discovery of DNA. What Crick and Watson discovered was essentially a Medieval truth: all of life's complexities are constructed by combinations of four. The DNA sequencing is based on four base pairs of amino acids: adenine, guanine, thymine, and cytosine. It is their unique combination that produces all of life's diversity. The genetic code has been compared to an alphabet with only four letters, and yet every living thing possesses a unique genetic code.

It is also worth noting that numerous connections exist between the fifty sets of four which are listed in Figure 2, and different individuals and cultures have associated them differently. For example, in the Middle Ages, the four periods of the daily cycle were linked to the four humours. Throughout the day, one was said to be regulated more or less by a particular temperament. Similarly, the age of cathedrals saw artists enthralled with order being associated between musical harmonic patterns and architecture, while in more recent centuries, technology has allowed artists to create instruments like the colour organ which unites the parts of music with the parts of coloured light. As Calvin Johansson has observed: "Art in a sense is a reflective microcosm of the ordering of the world" (1986, p. 95).

Creativity is Combining

If God is in the unique position of creating something out of nothing, and matter be neither created nor destroyed, then how may humans fulfil their call to sub-create? After all, as Lewis recognized in *Miracles*, there is a finite amount of stuff in the universe: "We all live in second-hand suits and there are doubtless atoms in my chin which have served many another man, many a dog, many an eel, many a dinosaur" (1947, p. 181). Tolkien raises this same question and answers it:

> Who can design a new leaf? The patterns from bud to unfolding, and the colours from spring to autumn were all discovered by men long ago. But that is not true. The seed of the tree can be replanted in almost any soil.
> (Tolkien, 1984, p. 145)

In a letter to Sister Penelope, Lewis explains,

> We re-arrange elements He has provided. There is not a *vestige* of real creativity *de novo* in us. Try to imagine a new primary colour . . . or even a monster wh[ich] does not consist of bits of existing animals stuck together. Nothing happens.
> (Lewis, 1988, p. 371)

Rearranging elements in combination: this is the critical step in the creation process; but it is only the third of three steps which Tolkien and the Inklings saw as necessary in creating. First an artist must select carefully those parts with which he or she will be grappling. Second, the artist must construct a frame within which she or he will place these elements – a boundary with rules by which the artist must abide. And finally the artist must interweave these parts in a unique, ordered, harmonious manner.

The selection of parts is a unique task for every artist. A musician possesses well-defined elements with which to work: the musical scale, orchestra sections and choral parts; similarly, a painter has an existing palette of colours. The elements which a writer must combine may not be so easily named (themes, plot elements, archetypal images, character types, lines of narration, etc.), but it is the act of choosing which items to use from these limited sets which is of critical importance.

Medieval writers, for example, constantly chose the same themes to reuse in their works, and yet as Lewis points out in *The Discarded Image*, this showed no lack of creativity: "If you had asked Layamon or Chaucer 'Why do you not make up a brand-new story of your own?' I think they might have replied (in effect) 'Surely we are not yet reduced to that?'" (1984, p. 211). Even in modern English literature, authors have purposefully chosen the most worthwhile story elements, even if they have been used before: "Shakespeare takes a few bones from the novel's plot and flings the rest to a well-deserved oblivion" (Lewis, 1984, p. 209). In "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien addresses the same selection process of an author: "But if we speak of a Cauldron [of mythic elements], we must not wholly forget the Cooks. There are many things in the Cauldron, but the Cooks do not dip in the ladle quite blindly. Their selection is important" (1984, p. 128). The selection, in fact, is the first, vital step in the creation of myth. Tolkien's decision to combine lines of narration is central to the structure of *The Lord of the Rings*, and will be considered shortly.

The construction of a "boundary" for any story is also an essential task according to Tolkien and the Inklings. In *The Last Battle*, Lewis uses the comparison between a mirror and a window to show how art – that is, the framed image – is related to, and different from, real life.

> And the sea in the mirror, or the valley in the mirror, were in one sense just the same as the real one: yet at the same time they were somehow different – deeper, more wonderful, more like places in a story: in a story you have never heard but very much want to know.
> (Lewis, 1973b, p. 170)

Tolkien also discusses the topic of framework in his essay "On Fairy-Stories":

> There is no true end to any fairy-tale . . . The verbal ending – usually held to be as typical of the end of fairy-stories as "once upon a time" is of the beginning – "and they lived happily ever after" is an artificial device. It does not deceive anybody . . . An enchanted forest requires a margin, even an elaborate border.
> (Tolkien, 1984, pp. 153, 160-161)

This border, then, is some construct of the author which determines how much art will be shown to a reader, since it is impossible to portray all of life everywhere.

Although each of the Arts possesses different sets of elements with which its artisans may work, these elements are available to all artists, and the talent of any one is determined by his or her skill in combining them in a unique way. And as permutation formulas will attest to, the number of ways in which the same elements may be recombined in unique ways is exponentially large. For this reason Tolkien warned artists against feeling frustrated at the limited number of usable materials: "We do not, or need not, despair of drawing because all lines must be either curved or straight, nor of painting because there are only three 'primary' colours" (1984, p. 145).

Tolkien believed that the unique, careful, harmonic combination of parts was the key to original art. First, the combination must be unique. Language is a good example of originality in combinations: provided with rudimentary vocabulary and basic knowledge of a language's syntax, even a child finds that he or she can use language in completely unique ways. It is true that most communication is usually more automatic than carefully considered, and yet that does not change the fact that every human has the ability to create unique utterances, simply because the linguistic elements allow unique combinations. Naturally, though, it is those in history who are careful in their language utterances that become great speakers and writers.

The artist's combinations must also be careful and ordered. Bad art, the Inklings believed, was not carefully constructed and did not produce harmony. Thus Screwtape claims, "We will make the whole universe a noise in the end" (Lewis, 1964, p. 114). And Tolkien wrote to his son of a trend in which music fails to do its job "well":

> Music will give place to jiving: which as far as I can make out means holding a "jam session" round a piano (an instrument properly intended to produce the sounds devised by, say, Chopin) and hitting it so hard that it breaks.
> (Tolkien, 1981, p. 89)

If an artist combines parts carefully in a unique way, he or she will not only create something new, and something harmonious, but also something more than a mere collection of the original parts. Lewis likens the experience to a painting with several contributors. "We should have to think of the total result chemically rather than arithmetically" (1984, p. 209). Of course, this is not at all a new idea, for Greek mythology expressed the same truth: "Each of the eight sirens . . . 'produced one sound, one note,' but the eight notes together produced a ninth feature, 'the concord of a single harmony'" (MacQueen, 1985, p. 30). It is this extra feature which Collins and Guetzkow have labelled the "assembly affect," by which the interaction of small groups produces a notably higher level of output than the mere combined work of individuals (Fisher and Ellis, 1990, p. 58).

The Valar discover that the beauty of the water cycle had been brought about after Melkor's attempts to disrupt the creation with changing temperatures:

> "[Melkor] hath bethought him of bitter cold immoderate, and yet hath not destroyed the beauty of thy fountains, nor of thy clear pools. Behold the snow, and the cunning work of frost! Melkor hath devised heats and fire without restraint . . . Behold rather the height and glory of the clouds, and the everchanging mists; and listen to the fall of rain upon the Earth!"
>
> Then Ulmo answered: "Truly, Water is become now fairer than my heart imagined, neither had my secret thought conceived the snowflake, nor . . . the falling of the rain."
> (Tolkien, 1982, p. 9)

The combination of each Valar's input, held together inside Eru's design, has produced something greater than a mere collection of their individual efforts.

Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings*

The skill of creation may best be seen in *The Lord of the Rings*, for one can see skill used at every step of its creation: a careful choice of elements to combine (that is, four lines of narration); the establishment of a clear boundary in which to combine these elements (a limited-perspective narrator); and a harmonious, ordered combination of these parts handled through five narrative techniques. Each of these points will be dealt with in turn.

After the breaking of the Fellowship, Tolkien divides his characters into four separate narrative groups, each one "led" by a head character. Gandalf is the first character to be divided from the Fellowship and represents the first narrative group. He usually travels alone, but at one point he accompanies Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli – the second narrative group, headed by Aragorn. Merry and Pippin make up the third narrative group, headed by Merry. Pippin is a secondary character because he accompanies both Gandalf and Merry at separate times. These first three groups come in contact with each other and move away again at several times during the story, but this is not true of the isolated fourth group, Sam and Frodo. Sam is the head of this group because it is through his eyes that a reader most often peers, most notably when Frodo is captured in Cirith Ungol.

This principle of groups acting together and separating again is explained nicely when Merry and Pippin ask if Treebeard plans to do anything with them: "I am not going to do anything *with* you: not if you mean by that 'do something *to* you' without your leave. We might do some things together. I don't know about *sides*. I go my own way; but your way may go along with mine for a while" (Tolkien, 1986b, p. 86). And in fact, Treebeard's way does correspond with the Hobbits' for a time. They go to Isengard together,

but due to the narrative perspective of the novel, the actions of the Ents are related only when they come in contact with members of the Fellowship.

This technique of splitting the focus of narration between separate groups is not at all new; in fact, Richard West has labelled it a reuse of a medieval narrative structure called the "interlace". "This was a narrative mode of such complexity and sophistication that, until recently, modern critics could not detect a coherent design in most medieval romances" (West, 1975, p. 78). By adopting the interlace form, Tolkien found himself having to combine carefully a large number of themes, characters, narrative groups, and sub-plots.

An understanding of Tolkien's division of four is essential to properly understanding the interlace structure. As Shippey explains, the plot undergoes "chronological 'leapfrogging'" (1983, p. 121), which makes its analysis difficult. As Peter Beagle has eloquently put it, "The structure of Tolkien's world is as dizzyingly complex and as natural as a snowflake or a spiderweb" (1986, p. xi). And for this reason Figure 7, a narrative timeline, was constructed. This timeline depicts only those events which take place after "The Breaking of the Fellowship". First, one should notice that not all events of Middle-earth are depicted, for the narrative itself is selective. Events outside the scope of the Fellowship are not shown (Faramir's and Éomer's various travels, for example). The timeline shows only the actions of the Fellowship members, for these are the only characters at whom the narrative "camera" is ever pointed. However, not even all of the events involving the Fellowship members are described in direct narrative. Some items are described in internal narrative after the event, or else only implied. Tolkien chose quite specifically what events he was going to show, and in what specific order, all to his best advantage. He described this to Rayner Unwin as "the rhythm or ordering of the narrative" (Tolkien, 1981, p. 170).

This "rhythm" lies at the heart of Tolkien's story-telling skills: the "natural" patterning of events, as West observed: "Such casual collisions of disparate people and events – in a manner familiar because it is the way in which things seem to us to happen in our own lives – knit the fabric of the story" (West, 1975, p. 83). And it is the interlace structure which allows this "rhythm" according to West:

> Interlace . . . seeks to mirror the perception of the flux of events in the world around us, where everything is happening at once. Its narrative line is digressive and cluttered, dividing our attention among an indefinite number of events, characters, and themes, any one of which may dominate at any given time.
> (West, 1975, pp. 78-9)

After Sam learns of all that has been going on while he was accompanying Frodo, especially the arrival of Oliphaunts, he is upset but realistic: "'Well, one can't be everywhere at once, I suppose,' he said. 'But I missed a lot, seemingly'" (Tolkien, 1986c, p. 290). Just like Sam, a reader cannot be "everywhere at once," for the art form of literature is uniquely like music in this respect: unlike a painting or sculpture or architecture, writing and music may only be experienced sequentially, at a pace and order determined by the artist.

And this "pace and order" Tolkien accomplished by combining, or rather "interweaving," his four lines of narrative. Of course, the position he places himself in is a difficult one for any author: for thirty-five of the novel's sixty-two chapters, his eight major characters are divided among four separate groups. By the end of Book Two, everything seems at its worst: Gandalf is dead; Boromir is dead; Merry and Pippin have been captured; and Frodo and Sam have foolishly gone on alone. And yet the image of an opening orchestra concert seems a more appropriate analogy than that of a funeral dirge. It is as if the individual instruments have been tuning up in the earlier chapters, and Tolkien has now begun his real performance. The laborious groundwork having been set, the author is anxious to break into song – and this is exactly what he does at the beginning of Book Three.

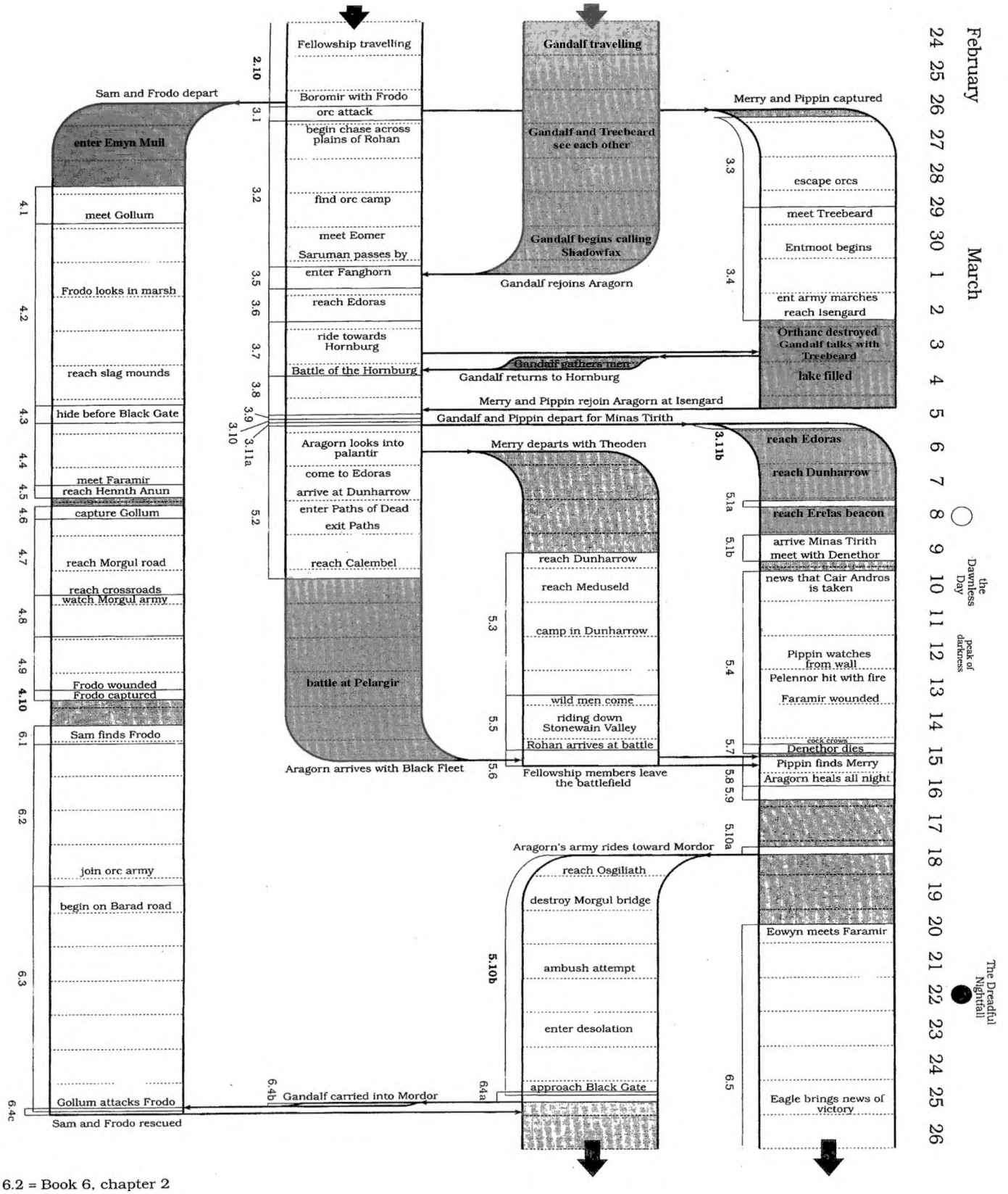
At first, Tolkien restrains himself by keeping the reader's eyes upon Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli. But it is not long before one discovers that not only are Merry, Pippin and Gandalf very much alive, but they are doing very important things for the plot. Likewise, one discovers that Sam and Frodo are not moving blindly toward Mordor; they have an important guide, Gollum. What Tolkien has essentially done is broken the plot into four-part harmony; or has taken the quiet, gentle murmur of tuning-up before a symphony piece and has suddenly brought out every instrument available to him, in perfect harmony.

The traditional view of music's four parts has been summarized by Giovanni de Bardi:

> Master bass, soberly dressed in semibreves and minims, stalks through the ground-floor rooms of his palace while Soprano, decked out in minims and semiminims, walks hurriedly about the terrace at a rapid pace and Messers Tenor and Alto, with various ornaments and in habits different from the others, stray through the rooms of the intervening floors.
> (Faulkner, 1986, p. 257)

This is also the way Tolkien would have understood traditional harmony. The Soprano line is that part of music which represents the highest performed notes, and is usually at the forefront of any listener's attention. It is also the part which tends to move around the scale most, taking the most risks range-wise, and usually contains the common, recognizable melody.

There is little doubt that Gandalf's actions clearly fit such a description. He is the prime mover of events according to Aragorn: "He has been the mover of all that has been accomplished, and this is his victory." (Tolkien, 1986c, p. 304). Whether he is moving to gather the scattered men of Rohan to lead them to Hornburg, flying with Gwaihir from Caradhras to Lothlórien, or racing over the countryside on Shadowfax to rescue or help defend, Gandalf is usually at the centre of attention. And this fits precisely into his plan of diverting Sauron's attention away from Mordor and Frodo's approach. The elements which Gandalf adds to the story are those which are most generally known to the other characters in Middle-earth, and which a reader most commonly



6.2 = Book 6, chapter 2

4.10 = last chapter of Book 4

non-curved narrative blocks = characters are not travelling when the narrative line ends; these are moments of halt (i.e. Isengard, Minas Tirith)

shaded areas = events not related in direct narrative

white areas = events related in the indicated chapter

created by S. Yandell, 1992

Figure 7

associates with the "action" of a story.

The Bass line, on the other hand, is commonly understood to be that part which is most stable, taking the least recognizable bounds; it is often slow and methodical, and yet usually sets the tone for the entire piece. And Sam and Frodo's march to Mount Doom is just that: often slow and methodical, with a tone of slight hope which sheds light on the whole work. Tolkien even emphasizes the long, drawn-out nature of their journey by separating its narration at only one point (after Frodo's capture), rather than the numerous narrative leapfrogging done between the other groups.

One's inability to always pick this part out from the others (none of the other Fellowship members have any idea as to how Sam and Frodo are progressing) is also entirely according to the divine power which leads them quietly into Mordor. The Bass line usually underlies any chord formed by all the other combined parts, and thus acts as a "harmonic anchor" within a piece. Similarly, Sam and Frodo's quest acts as the anchor around which all other sub-plots are taking place. Like the Soprano part of Baroque choral music, the Bass part is also called upon more frequently to perform solos.

The Tenor and Alto sections, as Giovanni's description implies, are generally much vaguer parts to define, but the Alto part shares the treble cleft with the Soprano line, while the Tenor line shares the Bass cleft. Thus, Aragorn is associated more closely with Gandalf, and can be compared to the Alto line (Pippin claims "I think they must be related" (Tolkien, 1986c, pp. 178-9)). The four Hobbits are also more closely associated, marking Merry's as the Tenor line.

The four-part organization of the orchestra is a traditional one which also aligns closely to the roles of these four narrative groups. In such a comparison, Gandalf would most naturally represent the String section. Norman Del Mar's *Anatomy of the Orchestra* helps explain why:

> The string body occupies a primary position in the constitution of the orchestra. This is not merely so in a visual sense – their position at the front of the concert platform – but because the very presence of multiple strings can be taken to determine whether a group of instruments should be described as an orchestra at all. (Del Mar, 1981, p. 29)

Similarly, Gandalf's presence as motivator defines the force opposing Sauron. And again, his actions are at the forefront of the "piece." The String instruments have been called the most "stirring" set of instruments, and according to how they are written into a piece, may inspire a listener to get up and move, or else quietly reflect. The soft techniques available to the Strings represent well the contemplative, patient side of Gandalf which we know he learned from Nienna (Tolkien, 1982, pp. 24-5). Gandalf's actions also display as wide a range as the Stringed instruments: as motivator he stirs men to action; he plays a violin-type lightness around the Hobbits when he is pleased, or else a cello/bass seriousness when things seem uncertain. Gandalf's actions add constant surprise to the piece: he rides off with Théoden's prized horse and goes off alone right before the Battle of the Hornburg.

The Percussion, or drum, section is reflected in Sam and Frodo's movements. Much like an orchestra's Percussion, Sam and Frodo work in the background of the piece, alone, setting a constant, methodical pace. And yet they are able to produce some of the largest sounds at need, as the eruption of Mount Doom testifies. Percussion also seems to pervade most of their journey, whether it is the approaching drum-beats of an Orc army (Tolkien, 1986b, p. 393), or else the warning bell piercing from the gates of Cirith Ungol (Tolkien, 1986c, p. 218). The sombre tone of Frodo's pessimism and the clear ring of Sam's continual hope may also be expressed within the range of Percussion instruments.

On the other hand, Merry seems to move into a situation with all the clamour and glory one might desire in a dramatic confrontation. The grandiose scale in which Isengard is overturned, or even the Rohirrim's entrance onto the Pelennor Fields, illustrates the type of blaring action which can be effectively represented by the brilliance of the Brass instruments. And of course it is Merry who blows the horn of Rohan to announce the beginning of the Shire battle against Saruman's men (Tolkien, 1986c, p. 353). Del Mar has described the Brass section in the following way: "Apart from its enormous power, one of the principal qualities of the brass is rhythmic incisiveness, which can have the edge on the entire orchestra . . . The upper end of the trumpet's register is so immensely striking that it imposes . . . the severest strain on human nerves and psychology in the entire orchestra" (Del Mar, 1981, pp. 3-4). This type of brass brilliance is reminiscent of how most of Merry's friends work: both the Ents and the Rohirrim.

The Woodwinds, while also being able to represent power, are used for colouring a piece and giving it a brighter quality. "One outstanding characteristic of the flute family is . . . [its] repertoire full of dazzling cascades of scales and arabesques that exploit this virtue [of agility] . . ." (Del Mar, 1981, p. 168). The Woodwinds are able to create a feeling of mysteriousness, respect and honour – all elements of Aragorn's character. Similarly, Aragorn displays his power by leading the Dead Riders, but this is a frighteningly surrealistic scene that only the Woodwind instruments could adequately capture. Usually placed centrally within an orchestra, the actions of the Woodwinds also act as stability for the other sections – much like Aragorn's actions do.

One of Tolkien's favourite analogies of creativity was that of light, and his understanding of its components is reflected in verse:

> Man, Sub-creator, the refracted Light
> through whom is splintered from a single White
> to many hues, and endlessly combined
> in living shapes that move from mind to mind.
> (Tolkien, 1984, p. 144)

The primary divisions of "splintered" light are red, green, blue-violet, and the combination of all of these, white. Gandalf's new role as the head of the White Council allows him to don the white robe of that position – garb which also matches the colour of his beard. Similarly his pure, selfless intentions and his angelic nature associate him with the flawless characteristics of white. Unlike his predecessor

Saruman the "many-coloured," Gandalf is not at all concerned with gaining personal status in Middle-earth. Rather, bringing about Eru's will and aiding Eru's creatures act as the prime motivations for his work. It is also his position as divine representative which places him morally and racially at the centre of the other three narrative groups.

The idea of associating "red" with Sam and Frodo's narrative line is not at all a random choice. It is this colour which predominates the settings of all their actions. Within one sequence of nine pages in *The Two Towers* (1986b), five references alone help establish a definite "hue" which dominates the scenes: "fire-flecked sky" (p. 387), "a dull red glare" (p. 390), a "fiery glow" (p. 390), "the Sun . . . falling in an ominous fire" (p. 394), "one large red eye in the midst of its forehead" (p. 395).

These are the days of travel in which they approach Mordor and the Crossroads of the West, but once Sam and Frodo enter Mordor, the theme of red becomes even more dominant. Numerous references are made to the "red glare of Mordor," the glowing red window in the tower of Cirith Ungol, the red-hued torches of the Orcs, and red blood (discovered after the Orc battle). Even the annoying flies, they notice, suggest the red eye insignia which is emblazoned upon all weapons and uniforms of Mordor: they were "marked like orcs with a red eye-shaped blotch . . ." (Tolkien, 1986c, p. 243). One of the better descriptions of Mount Doom itself is made as Sam peers from the Tower window: "A fresh turmoil was surging in its deep wells, and the rivers of fire blazed so fiercely that even at this distance of many miles the light of them lit the tower-top with a red glare" (Tolkien, 1986c, p. 221). It is this same volcano which spews forth in red, eruptional glory at the end of their quest. In fact, its name *Orodruin* means "mountain of red flame" in the Sindarin dialect of Elvish (Foster, 1979, p. 397).

The colour green, Tolkien explains, is a Hobbit favourite; but its particular association with Merry and Pippin is based on something even more significant. Their visit to Fangorn Forest – the last great green section of forest which once stretched all the way past the Shire – evokes an act of hospitality on Treebeard's part: "I can give you a drink that will keep you green and growing for a long, long while" (Tolkien, 1986b, p. 87). And Merry's travels through the forest on the slopes of the Ered Nimrais suggest this colour as well.

Finally, there exist some obvious ties between Aragorn and the colour of blue-violet. Aragorn's river approach to the Battle of Minas Tirith links him to blue water, but it is his genealogy which plays a greater role in this connection. Because of his direct Númenórean descent, his bond to the "land beneath the waves" should bring the blue deluge to mind; and his claim to the throne of Gondor makes one aware of his true royal nature. The blue-violet colour combination is actually considered a subdivision of "purple" according to many colour schemes; and it is purple which has been a symbol of royalty since the earliest societies found its dye most expensive.

Each of these four groups also seems to have clear ties with one of the four elements. As one of the Maiar, Gandalf is shown to travel most often by air. Gwaihir the eagle rescues him from atop Orthanc (Tolkien, 1986a, p. 343) and removes him from the top of Zirakzigil after his battle with the Balrog (Tolkien, 1986b, p. 135). This eagle is a symbol of Manwë's presence in Middle-earth and acts as the guardian for the Lord of Air (Tolkien, 1982, p. 44). Gandalf's other form of transport, the horse Shadowfax, is described as bearing its rider "swift as the flowing wind" (Tolkien, 1986a, p. 344).

Aragorn's lineage as a true Númenórean connects him logically with water, as do the sea-desires of his companion, Legolas. The earth nature of the Hobbits links Merry with the earth, as does his interaction with those natural creatures from earth's past: the Ents and the Woses. The goal of Sam and Frodo's quest, the fires of Mount Doom, associates them clearly with fire: "The fires below awoke in anger, the red light blazed, and all the cavern was filled with a great glare and heat" (Tolkien, 1986c p. 275).

Systems for structuring groups of humans have defined social classes since the earliest societies. It was, however, Indian society which declared every human to be part of one of four castes. These four existed because "mankind once comprised four races" (Birren, 1963, p. 43). Each of the four races was said to have come from a different part of the creator's body: from the mouth of the creator, the priests; from the arms, warriors; from the thighs, merchants; and from the feet, servants. These are the four varnas, *varna*, in Sanskrit, meaning "colour" (Birren, 1963, p. 43).

Not surprisingly, the four groups of Fellowship members also align with these cross-sections of society. The priests, as a sacred class, were to study, teach and act as divine representatives on earth, much like Gandalf. The warriors were responsible for governing and fighting the wars; Aragorn fills just such a role. Similarly, the other two members of Aragorn's group come from royal houses, and become members of the Fellowship to defend their races. The mercantile class were to cultivate their fields and engage in business and trade; Merry and Pippin fill such roles within the Shire.

And finally, the servile class obtained their livelihood by labouring for others. The character of Sam has always been of interest to scholars, for his rich delineation is a real tribute to Tolkien. As David Harvey observes in *The Song of Middle-earth*:

> Sam has been in service all along. As Frodo's gardener and as helper, servant and companion he doggedly attends to the practical needs and wants of the travellers and their pack animals . . . Sam's horizons are limited. He does not seek greater things or even greatness itself. He knows his place and he intends to stay there.
> (1985, p. 124)

These five sets of associations should provide adequate evidence for a careful selection of main characters on Tolkien's part.

Tolkien selected a boundary for his work very carefully: a single-narrator perspective which not only helps make *The Lord of the Rings* a unified piece, but also makes it quite distinct from Tolkien's other works. In fact, in *The Lord of*

the Rings, the author's desire for a well-ordered novel with harmony between its complicated parts meant that the nature of the narrator was to be wholly different from the nature of *The Hobbit*'s. Just as the sub-plots were to be included, the complexity of the characters increased, and the geography expanded, the narrator was going to require immaculate accuracy in his adherence to self-made rules.

Tolkien discussed the rules of this narrator in a letter to Milton Waldman: "As the high Legends of the beginning are supposed to look at things through Elvish minds, so the middle tale of the Hobbit takes a virtually human point of view – and the last tale blends them" (Tolkien, 1981, p. 145). Once again we have a blending – a combining; in this case, a blending of perspectives. Tolkien was not to use the distant, lofty, omniscient narrator of *The Silmarillion* whose concerns were clearly Elven; nor the familiar story-teller narrator who spoke distinctly to children and concentrated on the actions of all the different races. As the title-pages indicate, the Hobbits' concerns were to be the centre of this story. And with this perspective in mind, Tolkien set two restrictions for his narrator.

First, this Hobbit perspective required that any events which neither involved, interested, nor directly affected the Hobbits were excluded, making room for the events which were very important to the Hobbits. Although the Battle of Bywater may have seemed trivial in comparison to the Battles of Lothlórien or the Battle of Pelargir, it is the former which receives an entire chapter of description. Likewise, the courtship of Sam and Rose receives more treatment than that of Aragorn and Arwen. Second, Tolkien dispensed with the omniscient freedom he had allowed himself in *The Silmarillion* and *The Hobbit*. Rather, he decided to only show scenes which had been seen by one of the Hobbits or else by one of their close friends in the Fellowship. The adoption of these narrator-restrictions is as much an aid to order and harmony in *The Lord of the Rings* as the strict guidelines of a sonnet are for a poet, or the time signatures for a composer.

The Lord of the Rings is quality art, finally, because the combination of the narrative parts is done in a skilled, harmonic way. This harmonic rhythm is produced with five techniques: 1) the order in which information is shown, 2) the length of time focus is placed on each narrative group, 3) the frequency of shifting between the various narratives, 4) the narrative breaks or cliffhangers, and 5) the inclusion of time-matches, cross-line communication and universal reference points.

When the tension of war rises with the approach of the Battle of Minas Tirith, Tolkien is able to reflect this in the narrative by switching more and more frequently between the various narrative groups (see Figure 7). Similarly, when Tolkien wants to heighten the effectiveness of any cliffhanger, he does so with the ordering of the narrative. He reveals pieces of information selectively so that a reader progresses with only the amount of information which will make the moments of tension most suspenseful. Aragorn's surprise arrival with the Black Fleet, for example, is dependent on a lack of knowledge of his earlier exploits, but the death of Denethor gains poignancy because it is described after the arrival, and the victory at Minas Tirith has been assured. One also knows, unlike Éomer, that Aragorn and the Grey Company have passed safely through the Paths of the Dead by the time the Rohirrim depart: "He is lost. We must ride without him, and our hope dwindles" (Tolkien, 1986c, p. 82). Understanding Éomer's despair is vital for understanding his character, and yet his pessimism takes on a deeper quality when one recognizes its unjustified nature.

It is for suspense purposes that Tolkien shows Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli chasing the Orc army over Rohan before showing Merry and Pippin covering the same ground. This allows for the introduction of a number of mysteries (i.e. how Pippin's broach was dropped, how the two escaped, etc.) before a reader is shown the actual scenes with the Hobbits. A rich piece of foreshadowing is also provided when Tolkien reveals Gandalf's resurrection (his appearance to Aragorn) after Merry and Pippin have told Treebeard of Gandalf's death (thus evoking a strange reaction from him since, as one learns later, Treebeard has spoken to Gandalf only two days earlier).

Tension is also aroused when Frodo's mithril coat is brought out to the army at Mordor's Gate, for the last thing a reader has seen of Frodo was his corpse being locked inside a Mordorian stronghold with Sam trapped outside. Tolkien plays the difficult situation for all its emotional impact, and Gandalf's sign of real despair here (one of the first) tops the effect magnificently. And just as urgency becomes the greatest element for achieving the quest, readers are forced to struggle through the disheartening passages of how, even after being rescued, Frodo and Sam's progress across Mordor is far from rapid: "The night seemed endless and timeless, minute after minute falling dead" (Tolkien, 1986c, p. 267).

Tolkien's emphasis upon the end of the quest and the reunion of the Fellowship members is made in a powerful way. Just after the Ring has been destroyed and Sauron's armies have poured from Mordor's Gate, Tolkien shows, for the first time, an overlapping of events in the narrative. Normally, if the narrative shifts from one of the groups, the narrator picks their story up again at the same moment or at a later point, but never back to events already described. The importance of this final eucatastrophe, however, warrants an exception. Twice a reader is with Gandalf when he cries, "The Eagles are coming! The Eagles are coming!" (Tolkien, 1986c, pp. 208, 278), and twice one hears Frodo say, "I am glad you are here with me. Here at the end of all things, Sam" (Tolkien, 1986c, pp. 277, 280).

Figures 8 and 9 list the three literary techniques which Tolkien employed to prevent cacophony as he wove his four groups. These time-matches, communications and universal reference points all provide lubrication within the narrative. The first of these, "time matches," are short references written into one line of narrative which merely remind a reader about the simultaneous actions taking place elsewhere in the story: "At last [Pippin] came out of shadow to the seventh gate . . . as Frodo walked in the glades of Ithilien . . ." (Tolkien, 1986c, p. 26). "But [Sam and Frodo] were alone . . . and Gandalf stood amid the ruin of

Maintaining harmony in The Lord of the Rings:

1. References to other narrative lines (time matches)

No.	location	context (what's happening)	reference to simultaneous event	location
1.	4.1 TT274	Storm clouds pass Sam and Frodo in Emyn Muil	Riders of Rohan ride toward Meduseld after having passed Aragorn	(NPONL)
2.	4.3 TT318	Sam and Frodo hide before the Black Gate	"Aragorn was far away" and palantir crashes before Gandalf	3.10 TT241
3.	5.1 RK21	Pippin and Gandalf ride towards Minas Tirith	Sam and Frodo watch the full moonset at Henneth Annun	4.6 TT371
4.	5.1 RK26	Pippin ascends Minas Tirith	Frodo walks in the glades of Ithilien	4.7 TT386
5.	5.2 RK65	Aragorn and the Grey Company head for Edoras	Theoden travels "by slow paths in the hills"	(NSIDN)
6.	5.3 RK76	Theoden and Merry come out of the hills	Pippin watches Prince enter Minas Tirith	5.1 RK50
7.	5.4 RK97	Pippin on walls of Minas Tirith	Frodo sees sunset at Cross Roads	4.7 TT395
8.	5.4 RK126	Gandalf confronts nazgul at gate	Rohan's horns announce arrival	5.5 RK138
9.	5.7 RK160	Gandalf bearing Faramir to Houses of Healing	Nazgul shrieks as it dies	5.6 RK143
10.	6.1 RK212	Sam outside Cirith Ungol	Aragorn leading Black Fleet from Pelargir	(NSIDN)
11.	6.1 RK212	Sam outside Cirith Ungol	Merry and Theoden ride down Stonewain Valley	5.5 RK132
12.	6.1 RK212	Sam outside Cirith Ungol	Pippin watches madness grow in Denethor	5.4 RK120
13.	6.2 RK240	Sam and Frodo crossing Mordor	Theoden lays dying on Pelennor Fields	5.6 RK143
14.	6.2 RK240	Sam and Frodo crossing Mordor	Nazgul shrieks as it dies	5.6 RK143
15.	6.3 RK261	Sam and Frodo on road to Dark Tower	Aragorn passes Cross Roads and sets Minas Morgul aflame	5.10 RK197,8
16.	6.3 RK261	Sam and Frodo at the Dreadful Nightfall	Aragorn draws near to end of living lands	5.10 RK199
17.	6.3 RK270	Sam and Frodo crawling up Mount Doom	Aragorn and Company at the Black Gate	5.10 RK206
18.	6.3 RK275	Frodo puts on the ring	Sauron's army falters at the Black Gate	6.4 RK278
19.	6.5 RK297	Eowyn and Faramir at city walls	Barad-Dur is destroyed	6.3 RK276

(NPONL) = Not part of a narrative line *(NSIDN) = Not shown in direct narrative*

2. Communication between narrative lines (through visions, dreams, unique sight)

(visions between non-narrative lines - i.e. those in palantir, Galadriel's mirror - are excluded)

No.	location	setting	person/method	sight	location
1.	1.7 FR177	At Tom Bombadil's	Frodo, in dream,	sees the past: Gandalf being rescued from Orthanc	(NSIDN-2.2 FR343)
2.	2.10 FR519	On Amon Hen	Frodo, in vision,	hears Gandalf warning "Take off the ring!"	(NSIDN - 3.5 TT126)

Figure 8

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3. References to items outside the narrative lines (universal reference points)

Moon phases - full moon, Mar 10; new moon, Mar 22		
1.	3.2 TT27	waxing moon at the start of the great chase
2.	3.2 TT35	young moon during the chase
3.	3.3 TT63	slim moon while hobbits are travelling with orcs
4.	3.6 TT140	waxing moon as Gandalf and Aragorn ride to Meduseld
5.	3.8 TT198	waxing moon as group approaches Isengard
6.	4.6 TT371	full moonset at Henneth Annun
7.	5.1 RK21	full moonset on Pippin's ride to Minas Tirith
8.	5.2 RK60	approaching full moon as Aragorn prepares to depart Hornburg
9.	5.3 RK78	recent full moon as Theoden reaches Harrowdale
10.	5.10 RK200	waxing moon four nights old as Aragorn approaches the Black Gate
Final sunset before the darkness - evening, Mar 9		
1.	4.7 TT387	Sam, Frodo and Gollum see sunset
2.	5.3 RK76	Merry riding with Theoden
3.	5.1 RK50	Pippin on walls of Minas Tirith
The Dawnless Day opens - morning, Mar 10		
1.	4.7 TT390	Sam, Frodo and Gollum awake to no dawn
2.	5.2 RK75	Aragorn and Dead Company see no dawn
3.	5.1/.4 RK52/95	Pippin with Gandalf
4.	5.3 RK88	Merry with Theoden
Sunset of the Dawnless Day - evening, Mar 10		
1.	4.7 TT395	Frodo at the Cross Roads
2.	5.4 RK97	Pippin on walls of Minas Tirith
Rain begins in Gondor - afternoon, Mar 15		
1.	5.6 RK147	Merry leaving the Pelennor Fields
2.	5.7 RK162	Gandalf and Pippin leaving the Houses of Healing
Winds change, Darkness passes - dawn, Mar 15		
1.	5.5 RK135,7	Merry sees and feels the changes
2.	5.7 RK154	Gandalf and Pippin see and feel changes
3.	5.9 RK188	(indirect narrative only - Gimli describes how they observed changes)
4.	6.2 RK240	Sam and Frodo see and feel changes
Sullen, red sun - afternoon, Mar 25		
1.	5.10 RK 206	Aragorn and Company see this at the Black Gate
2.	6.3 RK273	Sam and Frodo see this from Mount Doom

Figure 9

created by S. Yandell, 1992

Isengard and strove with Saruman, delayed by treason" (Tolkien, 1986b, p. 318).

Secondly, there are the rare occurrences when characters communicate between narrative lines. This does not include all visions and prophecies, but those times when one narrative line sees another during the time of the divided Fellowship. There are two examples of this: when Frodo sees Gandalf atop Orthanc, and Gandalf calls to Frodo on Amon Hen to take off the Ring. Thirdly, there are references to universal occurrences which are essential for letting a reader know the continuity of the events throughout Middle-earth. Most often these involve the description of some natural event which all group members are experiencing at the same time (such as a sunset, moonset, rain) or else an event of major importance which separate groups can experience from different locales (the arrival of the Rohirrim, the death of the Nazgûl king, morning of the Dawnless Day). About all such passages Shippey has noted:

> These references and allusions tie the story together, we would say . . . They prove the author has the story under control, and are significant to any reader who has grasped the entire plot. However that is not how they appear to the characters, or to the reader whose attention has lapsed.
> (Shippey, 1983, p. 123).

Thus, a reader experiences Tolkien's Middle-earth in the same way in which Tolkien and the Inklings experienced their own world: as an ordered creation which contains harmonic combinations of four parts. Tolkien's, Lewis's and Williams's fiction all attest to these ideas, but it is Tolkien's masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings*, which appears to be the most effectively and impressively constructed answer to Lewis's call for art which makes one feel "that we have been led through a pattern or arrangement of activities which our nature cried out for."

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